

021607Z Aug 04

ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	WHA-00	VC-00	TEDE-00
	INR-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00	AC-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00
	OMB-00	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00
	SS-00	TRSE-00	T-00	IIP-00	PMB-00	DRL-00	G-00
	SAS-00	/001W					

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4983
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 005730

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/01/2014

TAGS: FR PREL VE ELAB

SUBJECT: FRENCH LABOR CONCERNED WITH VENEZUELA

Classified By: POL M/C JOSIAH ROSENBLATT FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D

¶1. (SBU) Emboffs met July 23 at the unions' request with Michele Simonnin, of the trade union Workers' Strength (CGT-FO) and Philippe Selva of the General Confederation of Workers (CGT), two of the three largest labor unions in France, to discuss US foreign policy regarding Venezuela. The labor representatives presented Laboff and Poloff with a French translation of labor declarations from organizations in Brazil and Peru critical of US "interference" in Venezuela that seemed to have been specifically edited for their meeting with Emboffs (faxed to WHA/AND). The labor representatives opened by expressing concern for Venezuelan sovereignty, and posing two questions: why had the U.S. Congress been holding discussions on "internal Venezuelan matters," and why was the USG (sic) financing the August 15 referendum?

¶2. (SBU) Poloffs clarified the first point by providing the context of WHA A/S Roger Noriega's June 24 remarks to the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere. Ms. Simonnin appeared to have been at least marginally reassured to learn that A/S Noriega's remarks had been made as part of the normal discussions that exist between Department of State officials and the Congress concerning U.S. foreign policy. Emboffs addressed the second point by explaining the status of the National Endowment for Democracy and its funding process, but the visitors remained skeptical of NED motives. Poloffs reviewed USG policy, noting multilateral support for OAS Resolution 833, our desire to see an open and transparent referendum next month and our support for OAS and Carter Center observers.

¶3. (SBU) In discussing USG policy, the labor representatives seemed more focused on an ideal regarding Venezuelan sovereignty than the complex realities of international relations. They attempted to twist Emboffs' statements, asking several times whether the USG considered the Chavez government legitimate and questioning the degradation of U.S.-Venezuelan relations. Emboffs explained USG policy, and said the USG strives for good relations with Venezuela, as evidenced by the encouraging tone of A/S Noriega's comments.

¶4. (C) Comment. The two union representatives genuinely seemed to believe the USG had taken the first steps in a scenario likely to lead to a military invasion of Venezuela to protect the interests of U.S. oil companies and/or consumers. They alluded to supposed indicators, e.g., "the history of U.S. involvement in overthrowing democratically elected Latin American governments," and "the invasion of Iraq because of U.S. oil interests." Although the visitors were pleased to have had a chance to present their concerns, the force of their misconceptions was striking. End comment. Wolff

NNNN